2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese

668 609 moved to Vietminh-controlled areas, and the Vietminh could claim a considerable number of supporters among the younger Chinese.

186 The advances of militant nationalism in some others of the Southeast Asian countries had made the widespread fear of Chinese economic encroachment a ready source of political capital. In both Siam and the Philippines measures to diminish the Chinese share of the retail trade which had been initiated before the war were now intensified and an anti-Chinese plank was inevitable in the platform of every political party. Chinese Communists were said meanwhile to be actively assisting the Hukbalahaps, the agrarian insurgents in Luzon.

668 669 This was the dilemma in which the Chinese still found themselves in the fourth year after the Japanese defeat. But in one country, Malaya, their difficulties as a community became most acute when the Malayan Communist Party, consisting itself mostly of Chinese, decided in June 1948 to start an active terrorist campaign against the British. The constitutional experiment of the Malayan Union followed by that of the Federation of Malaya had left the Chinese generally in a state of political apathy (since the new constitution greatly favoured the Malays at their expense). When the terrorists, who were largely the old guerrillas of the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army, struck, it was the Chinese themselves who provided most of the casualties on both sides. Many *Towkays* (Chinese business men) were intimidated into contributing to the Communists' funds or supplying them with goods and, being largely isolated, were not in a position to resist these demands. This in turn brought them into conflict with the British authorities. The Chinese squatter community, too, being on the fringe of the jungle was readily utilized by the terrorists and suffered accordingly when British troops and police took reprisals against their villages, burning down their houses and destroying their crops. Many squatters were banished to China. The great danger the British ran was that harsh measures might antagonize large sections of the population, for the government of a great majority by a small minority must ultimately depend upon the consent of the governed. Large-scale measures of varying success were in progress against the terrorists in 1949 when the defeat of the Chinese Nationalist armies by those of the Communists in China and the collapse of the Kuomintang Government gave new

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese

were almost entirely uninterested in them except as traders, labourers, or agents for dealing with the native peoples. In the last capacity the Chinese were very useful, for they had a knowledge of native ways which the Europeans lacked and in any case had no leisure to gain, being occupied so much of their time in warfare among themselves. The Chinese, in their turn, were interested in these white barbarians only to the extent that it was expedient to know their peculiarities. They showed themselves, however, much more adaptable to learning about the white race than the Europeans did to learning about them, for, generally speaking, the Spanish, the Dutch, the British, and the French were almost completely ignorant of the Chinese language and *mores*, and the Chinese were happy that it should be so. Another reason for the failure of Europeans to acquire any real knowledge of the people among whom they lived was that for the European life in the tropics—at any rate from the seventeenth to the early nineteenth century—was short, and he either returned home with a competence within a few years or else perished. Thus it was found convenient by the Company and early colonial Governments to leave the conduct of their community affairs to the Chinese headmen, except in the more serious cases, and this gave the Chinese much liberty of action. Unfortunately the fears of the tiny minority such as were the Europeans, especially in face of the increasing numbers of the Chinese, put them in a very anxious and suspicious frame of mind. The Chinese ethos, usually so serene, was subject to occasional social squalls or typhoons when the community was seized with mass hysteria. This was really only a means of dispersal of an accumulation of real or imaginary grievances and the trouble subsided, if handled with reason and tolerant firmness, almost as quickly as it had arisen. But in the minds of the Europeans with their tiny garrisons the outbreaks were often interpreted as signs of rebellion. Indeed in some cases they were rightly so interpreted, and there can be no doubt that when fear and distrust had dried up relationship into a tinder a spark would fire it into a rebellion, as was the case in Manila on St Francis's Eve 1603, when things had gone so far that it was either the Chinese or the Spanish who had to be destroyed. It is equally certain that a greater degree of understanding on either side would have averted this and later disasters.

Whilst thus simplifying the situation, it must be conceded that

2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
Chinese
China AF1

Whilst thus simplifying the situation, it must be conceded that the Chinese social organization overseas early revealed serious deficiencies. It was not a complete unit of China transplanted, but fragments from various settings placed together in one spot. Different tribes and classes were put into unwonted juxtaposition, and the criminal and unruly element was disproportionately strong (this last fact needs emphasis). Embryo communal or municipal systems were often taken charge of by the deadly Triad society which used them for its own purposes. At the same time, too rigid a distinction has been drawn between the 'benevolent' *kongsis* and the 'malevolent' *huis*, or secret societies: it seems that the two were not separated in this categorical fashion and in fact were sometimes distinct associations with benevolent functions and Triad societies at one and the same time.[1] The shortcomings of the system became very manifest at certain times, as in Java when Chinese secret societies plotted to seize power from the Dutch, and in the Straits Settlements when these societies under the Triad societies got much out of hand and caused riots and practised intimidation for many years, later extending their activities to Perak where they added to the existing disorder until it approached anarchy.

This, however, is a special aspect of Chinese society in the Nanyang and is by no means typical. By and large, the Chinese were very law-abiding and gave the ruling Powers little trouble. Schlegel was right when he said that the Chinese were 'easy to govern'. Indeed this quality has brought them, at times, into the contempt of rough European individualists who have dismissed this tractableness as the characteristic of 'sheep'.

Students of the Chinese language who have ploughed through the *Tsŭ Erh Chih*, Sir Francis Wade's Documentary Series, will remember a number of memorials in which prefects or intendants

[1] The writer, after extensive experience of secret societies and district and clan organization, is sceptical of many of the theories advanced by observers. Schlegel (as we have seen in the chapters on the Kongsis of Borneo) has definitely regarded the Kongsis as a transplanting of municipal organization necessary to the functioning of Chinese society. Yet they were certainly 'secret societies' under Triad or Heaven and Earth League control. Only when countries, such as Malaya, began to legislate to control these societies was a distinction made between 'good' and 'bad' societies: the former were granted registration; the latter, if they functioned without registration, were illegal and, of course, definitely 'secret societies'. The writer is of opinion that a great deal more research into the matter is called for. (W. L. Blythe, 'The Interplay of Chinese Secret and Political Societies in Malaya', in *Eastern World*, March and April 1950, adds considerably to our knowledge.)

14; Heine-Geldern E-4 (no date) 1942 ALl Southeast Asia ALl

643 772 principle as applied to the state really forms only part of a much wider complex and resulted from a conception of the universe and of human existence which regulated, and to a large extent still regulates, also the private lives of individuals. When in Siam and Cambodia people wore cloths of different color on different days of the week according to the color ascribed to the planet for whom the day is named, or when in Burma before any important undertaking they examine their horoscope and the lore of lucky and unlucky days, or when they kneel down for prayer on that side of the pagoda which in the cosmological system corresponds to the planet of the weekday on which they were born, they act on the same principle which governed the structure of their empires, their ideas of kingship and the ritual of their royal courts. It is clear then that the cosmomagic ideas, until a very recent past, had an extremely strong hold on the minds of the people.

Is all this a crumbling structure, giving way under the impact of modern civilization or may it still influence the political activities of the peoples concerned? The question is not easily answered. Information on this point is scarce. There are, however, a few indications.

669 643 772 We have it on the authority of H. G. Quaritch Wales that the people of Siam, around 1930, still held the ancient state ceremonies in high esteem, those ceremonies which to a large extent are governed by cosmological ideas. One may ask oneself, how much of this old tradition may have been at the bottom of the royalist rebellion of 1933.

In Burma the following cases may be considered as significant. In 1897, twelve years after the annexation of Upper Burma by the British, a Buddhist monk, U Kelatha, fell in love with a princess of the dethroned dynasty who promised to marry him if he became king of Burma. There followed the usual dreams or visions which revealed to him that in a former life he had been a Burmese prince and, moreover, that he would be king the moment he sat on the throne of the palace in Mandalay. With eighteen followers, all armed with swords only, he rushed through the city gates and tried to reach the royal palace, at that time seat of the English club. A few English officers armed with hunting rifles made an end to his attempt. The incident proves the extreme vividness of cosmomagic ideas at the close of the 19th century. As we have seen, whoever held the palace, the Mount Meru of the Burmese empire, thereby became the representative of Indra and king. It is completely in accord with the cosmomagic way of thinking that U Kelatha and his followers believed the mere occupation of the throne would make him automatically lord of the whole empire.

Unfortunately, very little authentic information is available on the Burmese

14: Heine-Geldern E-4 (no date) 1942 ALl Southeast Asia ALl

rebellion of 1930–31. However, the following detail, as revealed at the time by newspaper dispatches, is significant. One of the first actions of Saya San, the leader of the rebellion, was to build a "palace," in reality a bamboo hut somewhere in the jungle, with an inscription designating it as the "Palace of the Buddhist King." It is, of course, very easy to ridicule such pretensions, but it is more important to understand them. We have seen how inseparable king and palace were according to Burmese ideas. No kingdom could exist without a palace representing Mount Meru and forming its magic center, and the king, the "Lord of the Golden Palace," was king in the first line by his possession of the palace. Saya San's action in building a palace, a magic center for his embryonic empire, therefore corresponds closely to that of U Kelatha when he wanted to seat himself on the throne of the palace in Mandalay.

The story of the Myinmu rebellion of 1910, as told by Paul Edmonds in his book *Peacocks and Pagodas*, if it does not directly contribute to our knowledge of cosmomagic ideas, at least gives a significant instance of the power of the belief in rebirth, prophecies and portents. A young man of eighteen years, Maung Than, was returning from work in the fields smoking a cigar. Some people who passed him thought they saw smoke issuing from his arms. They talked about it in the village and the rumour reached some elders who were familiar with an old tradition according to which a former king of Burma, Chanyeiktha, would be reborn in the shape of a youth who had the power of making smoke issue from his arms. "Other signs and portents were looked for. Needless to say, they were forthcoming. The griffins at the foot of an old pagoda were seen to shake; gold showers fell on another pagoda; and everywhere omens multiplied which pointed to young Maung Than as the long-foretold reincarnation of king Chanyeiktha." Maung Than entered into the spirit of the game and put forth the usual claims of being invulnerable and of possessing the power to make himself invisible. With a crowd of a thousand followers armed with swords and spears he attacked the police station at Myinmu but was repulsed and eventually captured.

These incidents may suffice to show how lively the ideas of cosmic state and kingship, of rebirth and prophecy still are in Burma. I have little doubt that they played a role in the events accompanying the Japanese invasion. It can easily be predicted that whatever government will exist in Burma after the war, will have to reckon with these ideas and with the possibility of similar outbreaks as those mentioned above, perhaps even on a larger scale owing to the emotions stirred up by the present turmoil.

While certain dangers for peace and order inherent in the cosmomagic conception thus must be said to persist, one may ask whether there is any